Let Us Enjoy Nature More

Genesis 1:31

I love Nagasaki and Saga Prefectures. One of the reasons is that they still preserve abundant nature. Human beings can only experience true joy, peace, and satisfaction when they live in harmony with nature. God Himself rejoiced in the perfect nature He created and declared it to be "very good." Humanity, too, is a part of that creation. When people distance themselves from nature and become estranged from it, their spirit begins to crumble, leading to various kinds of discord.

I. Recognizing That God Created It

Let us not look at nature casually but consciously affirm that it is God's creation. We should not merely say "it is beautiful," but rather confirm that "God made it beautiful." We should not simply say "it tastes good," but acknowledge that "God made it delicious." God declared all of nature to be good. Though it has been marred and distorted by human sin, much of its magnificence still remains. Just as we humans will one day be fully transformed, so too will nature be renewed.

As part of nature, we are created to live in harmony with it, thereby living better lives filled with peace and fulfillment. When we are in nature, we feel liberated and healed. Just as gentle music calms the heart, birdsong refreshes us, and good food brings delight, being in nature naturally relaxes the human soul. In such a setting, let us praise God with all our strength—with gratitude and joy. Nature reveals the works of His hands, displaying His greatness, His power, His delicacy, His beauty, and His diversity.

II. Humanity Cannot Find Rest in Artificial Surroundings

Modern life is dominated by artificial environments, and within them, human beings sense no life. There may be a kind of beauty in artificial creations and a sense of wonder in technology, but when surrounded entirely by lifeless, inorganic things, people feel out of place. There is no sense of organic harmony, no sense of life—and therefore no sense of God. Reverence fades, prayer grows faint, and hearts become desolate. Even amid the pandemic, let us venture out into nature.

Technology can produce humanoid robots or animal-like machines that move and learn. They may even evoke some emotional response and will certainly play a role in offices, hospitals, and nursing homes. This is good in its place. Yet such things can never replace human beings. Even if perfect in words or tasks, they cannot communicate true heart-to-heart fellowship. They lack life; they are not God's creation. They must remain supplementary, lest they erode humanity itself.

Artificial flowers are now made so well that they look and feel real—even scented. Yet they can never replace real flowers. Despite the care required—watering, temperature—only real flowers satisfy, because they carry life. That is why we long to place living flowers in otherwise sterile offices: nature soothes the human heart.

III. Enjoying Untouched Nature

There is a difference between nature that humans have altered and nature left untouched. For human convenience—color, shape, taste, fragrance, size, or ease of handling—countless modifications have been made. Yet what humans call "improvement" often proves to be "deterioration" for nature itself. Such plants or animals become dependent on human help to survive. Even without altering the plants themselves, whole mountains turned into artificial cedar or cypress forests destroy true nature. Likewise, simplistic water management causes problems. Across the world, excessive pumping of groundwater for farming has caused salinization, turning vast lands into deserts.

God entrusted humanity with stewardship over nature (Genesis 1:28). But history shows that people have acted like tyrants, forcing nature into submission and destroying it. We must instead rule through the principles of nature, not against them. Japanese sensitivity has often leaned toward living "with" nature rather than "over" it. That is to be cherished. Still, we often compel and distort nature violently. Let us reaffirm that we are part of nature and live together with it.

As this pastor has long argued, if humanity wishes to survive, we must end the capitalist economy that relentlessly destroys nature and create a new economic order. The unending pursuit of wealth is the driving force of destruction. Without a new system, before Earth becomes uninhabitable, God's intervention must come: the renewal of all creation—the redemption.

IV. Waiting for the Redemption of Nature

When we treasure nature, our hearts are trained to await the day it will be redeemed—made completely new. God will transform the battered, twisted, and wounded nature of today into the perfect creation that He once declared "very good." Christ's redemption extends even to the natural world. Let us long for this.

God will make the nature of His eternal Kingdom the most beautiful and perfect of all. The apostle John described its city as pure gold, transparent as glass, adorned with precious stones. Yet for Jews who lived near wilderness and for Japanese surrounded by lush greenery, the imagery differs. For us, rather than gold and jewels, the vision might be green mountains, meadows bursting with flowers, birds soaring in the white clouds, and insects making music.

Revelation speaks of a river in that Kingdom—its bed and banks of gold. Yet I would rather see them covered in greenery, with fish swimming freely. Perhaps we might even fish there! But then, fishing involves killing, which is forbidden in that Kingdom. And John says, "the sea is no more." Does this mean literally no oceans? I think not. In John's time, the sea symbolized terror and danger. His words, I believe, mean that all fearful and threatening things will be gone.

In any case, let us love nature, enjoy it, and in it remember the God who created it, praising His greatness. God will be pleased and bless us.